Making Tolerance Judgments: The Effects of Context, Local and National

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The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of political context on tolerance judgments. Using an experiment embedded within a representative sample of the South African mass public, we explore the impact of four contextual factors on tolerance judgments. Generally, we discover that the actual attributes of a civil liberties dispute have little or no impact on tolerance judgments. Rather, pre-existing threat perceptions strongly dominate perceptions of the context, rendering impotent the "facts" of the dispute itself. We speculate that these findings are largely a function of the intense political divisions in South Africa. Because inter-group animosities are so strong, objective situational factors matter little in deciding whether to tolerate a hated political enemy. Thus, we conclude that context does indeed matter for tolerance, but that in countries like South Africa, the intensity of political conflict is far more significant than the characteristics of individual civil liberties disputes.

In most studies of political tolerance, researchers focus on relatively abstract and context-free attitudes, using measures such as: "Suppose [an] admitted communist wanted to make a speech in your community. Should he be allowed to speak, or not?" Tolerance is conceptualized as a generalized willingness to allow unpopular political views to be expressed. Tolerance questions such as this are asked annually in the General Social Survey, for instance, and are widely analyzed by social scientists (e.g., Gibson 1992, Bobo and Licari 1989, Karpov 1999).

Attitudes of this sort are no doubt important, but they may not tell the full story of how people form judgments when it comes to actual civil liberties

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disputes. Real civil liberties controversies may well be more contextualized than suggested by the relatively abstract measures typically employed by researchers. Disputes over civil liberties invariably turn on context—*who is speaking* is important, *what is being said* is important, and *where the speaking will take place* is important. People certainly employ general predispositions in judging actual civil liberties controversies,[1] but their general predispositions are thought by many to interact with a variety of situational characteristics. Consequently, knowing one's predispositions on matters of political tolerance does not necessarily generate successful predictions about whether one will tolerate a specific group acting within a specific context (Marcus et al. 1995).

Some earlier research on controversies over civil liberties explicitly incorporates this concern with context. For instance, Gibson and Bingham (1985) analyzed a dispute in Skokie, Illinois, over the attempt of members of the National Socialist Party of America, a Nazi group, to hold a demonstration in the village. Gibson (1987) found that contextual factors had much to do with support for the right of the Ku Klux Klan to hold an anti-homosexual demonstration in Houston. Similarly, Gibson and Tedin (1988), analyzing support for gay rights in Houston, incorporate several contextual variables into their model. Sniderman et al. (1989) address the question of contextual influences through an analysis of consistency in tolerance responses across groups and activities. Chanley (1994) focuses on a particular aspect of context—the personalization of threat—as do Green and Waxman (1987). Marcus et al. (1995) have devoted the most effort to understanding how context influences decisions, developing a model that involves both predispositions and perceptions of the context of civil liberties disputes. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) also treat context quite seriously in their analysis of the role media plays in framing civil liberties disputes. Even longitudinal work on political tolerance (e.g., Davis 1975; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982) may be thought of as contextual in the sense that changes over time in the perceived threat from political enemies are incorporated in the models of intolerance. And of course Stouffer's original research on intolerance in the United States (1955) was very heavily contextual since it was a case study of the Red Scare. Thus, scholars recognize that context is important when it comes to understanding the dynamics of political intolerance.

Cross-national research also typically treats context as necessary to understanding tolerance judgments. Sullivan et al. (1985), for instance, demonstrate that national contexts shape the identification of hated political enemies, even if substantial commonalities exist in the etiology of intolerance. Sullivan et al.

[1]Marcus et al. (1995) refer to these general tolerance attitudes as "standing decisions." They argue (1995, 21) "that over time, people will tend to make similar tolerance judgments when faced with a highly disliked group within a particular context. In essence, this standing tolerance decision is something of a habit that people can fall back on when a new but similar situation demands a judgment concerning civil liberties." This approach is similar to that adopted by Gibson and Bingham (1985).

(1993) address the way in which elite-mass differences are shaped by systemic attributes. Some quite useful non-U.S. case studies of tolerance exist, and these too rely heavily on incorporating context into their analysis (e.g., the Canadian Charter of Rights study by Sniderman et al. 1996). The small but growing cross-national literature on tolerance has contributed significantly to our understanding of different contextual influences on political tolerance (as in the analysis of the effect of education on tolerance in Russia—see Gibson and Duch 1993).

Nonetheless, many important questions have been left unanswered by earlier research. We do not know very much about which specific contextual factors are important and why. For instance, Marcus et al. (1995) have left us with the unexpected puzzle that the perceived power of a group has little to do with willingness to tolerate it. Powerful and powerless groups are tolerated (or not tolerated) at equivalent levels. Moreover, we are unclear about the role of deliberation in civil liberties disputes. In most real controversies, people talk with one another, try to convince opponents to change their views, and attempt to frame events in particular ways. In real disputes, the role of leaders is often crucial. And though cross-national research is becoming more common, most research has been conducted within the context of established democracies like the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom. Our understanding of the precise role of contextual factors in the making of a decision to tolerate or not is limited indeed.

The purpose of this research is therefore to investigate the influence of contextual factors on tolerance judgments. Based on a highly realistic experimental vignette presented to a representative sample of the South African mass public, we test the hypotheses that willingness to tolerate a demonstration by one's political enemies is affected by: (1) the community's antipathy toward the proposed demonstration; (2) whether the demonstration is expected to result in law breaking and violence; (3) the position of community leaders; and (4) the effect of deliberation and debate. Our general findings are quite unexpected: the specific context of the civil liberties controversy matters little to South Africans. Instead, attitudinal predispositions—in particular, preexisting *threat perceptions*—seem to shape all aspects of tolerance judgments. We conclude that context matters for tolerance, but that it is the South African context—the immediacy and realism of the threat posed by one's political enemies—that is more influential, not the elements of the situation itself. In short, context matters, but not always in direct and simple ways.

The Role of Context in Civil Liberties Disputes

Actual civil liberties disputes differ a great deal from the simplistic scenario depicted by the question "Should a communist be allowed to make a speech in your community?" Consider the famous (or infamous) case of Nazis attempting to demonstrate in Skokie, Illinois, the home of a large number of Holocaust survivors (see Barnum 1982, Downs 1985, Gibson and Bingham 1985, Strum

1999). Many elements of that context were crucial to understanding how people felt about the dispute. Some anticipated violence at the march; others did not. Some thought the march would be an opportunity to demonstrate community strength and solidarity; others thought irreparable harm would be done to those seeing or thinking of the hated Nazis marching in their community. Some framed the issue around Nazis; other framed it around the ordinances passed by the village and their impact on first amendment rights (on framing in civil liberties controversies see Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). The role of the courts was crucial in the dispute, as was the intervention of the American Civil Liberties Union (Gibson and Bingham 1985). Perhaps most important, opinion was dynamic; it evolved over the course of the squabble as different aspects of the context became more or less salient (Barnum 1982). Not many of the highly significant details of this civil liberties battle could be captured in the simple question, "Should Nazis be allowed to hold a demonstration in your community?"

How is it that contextual influences become so powerful in civil liberties disputes? Most likely, contextual aspects of disputes evoke value conflict. Most people, when confronted with an abstract stimulus like "should a communist be allowed to give a speech in your community?" react fairly simply, according to how threatening they perceive communists to be. They probably do not engage in a cost-benefit analysis of policies to repress communists since the question encourages people to think simplistically about "whether to do bad things to groups that are threatening." Earlier work has shown that if people are encouraged to process the stimulus in more complete, multidimensional terms, they often change their view based on the relative weight they assign to the multiple values implicated by disputes (Gibson 1996, 1998).[2] Thus, those who are tolerant may not think initially about the possibility of violence were a demonstration to be held, just as those who are intolerant may fail to consider the implications of allowing the authorities to say who can and cannot protest. Context is inevitably multidimensional, requiring people to evaluate and judge aspects of the dispute they might not otherwise consider.

This way of conceptualizing contextual influences comports well with recently developed theories of the survey response. Survey research has traditionally been thought of as the art of providing respondents stimuli that will provoke a report on the state of being of the person. Thus, when people are asked whether they approve of political groups, the traditional model envisages a simple process of recall: people search their memories in order to retrieve a thought that can serve as the basis for a reply. As Zaller and Feldman (1992, 579) characterize it: "The standard view is that when survey respondents say they favor X they are simply describing a pre-existing state of feeling favorably toward X."

This tradition in survey research is well established and provides important information about the properties of people. But in actual political disputes people must do far more than "look up" the appropriate attitude in their minds and

[2] On value conflict more generally see Gibson (1998), McGraw (1991), Tetlock (1983), and Tetlock, Armor, and Peterson (1994).

draw a conclusion. Especially when asked to consider complex topics like whether one should put up with one's enemies, looking up the answer in one's memory may not be an altogether easy task for many people. Instead of *recalling* opinions, many respondents are actually *creating* opinions, deriving them from the particular values stimulated by the question. Real politics involves judgment; it typically involves figuring out how incidents in the political environment connect with attitudes and values and, more important, how conflicts among competing values get resolved. In order to understand the nature of mass opinion, it is therefore necessary to reproduce something of the structure of actual political controversies within our surveys; it is useful to ask respondents not simply to recall attitudes and values, but to apply them to concrete circumstances involving ambiguity, uncertainty, and conflict. Simple, abstract questions like those used in the General Social Survey (GSS) surely do not accomplish this.

One purpose of this research is therefore to focus on the ways in which people make concrete judgments in contextualized circumstances. Perforce, we employ conflicts that are hypothetical (and highly simplified, even though we use real South African political groups), a strategy certainly inferior to case studies that examine actual political conflicts.[3] But what we lose in depth we perhaps gain in the strength of the causal inferences that can be drawn from our experimental research design. By combining survey and experimental methods, we are able to get considerable purchase on our general hypothesis that people are influenced by contextual factors when making decisions about whether to tolerate political activity by their hated political enemies.

The South African Context[4]

South African politics differs from politics in the United States in many important ways. Most obviously, South Africa is a "deeply divided society" (e.g., Horowitz 1991). Social and political cleavages are strong and are defined by race, by ethnicity, by language, and by class. A central objective of the apartheid regime in South Africa was to exacerbate conflict, especially among nonwhites, through legal racial classifications, with differential treatment across races (e.g., separate parliamentary chambers existed for Coloured South Africans and South Africans of Asian origin, while so-called homelands were created for Africans). Moreover, the government most likely created and certainly supported and funded the "Third Force" in South Africa, a clandestine political group responsible for many thousands of deaths in political strife between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Even whites are divided by language and history, with a long legacy of political, social, and economic conflict and competition.

[3] Sniderman (1993) refers to these case studies as "firehouse" studies. For examples of this genre of research see Gibson and Bingham (1985) and Gibson (1987).

[4] The data on which this article is based are drawn from a 1996 survey of the South African mass public (details are presented below). Consequently, this section refers to South African politics in the period following the first democratic elections in April 1994.

Moreover, democracy in South Africa is tenuous. Many fear majority tyranny (despite a lengthy enumeration of constitutionally protected individual rights), and the prospects that the ANC would ever lose power appear slight. At the time of our survey, political conflict often meant political violence, and state institutions were ill-equipped to provide much protection to ordinary people.[5] Little seems to unite South Africans of different circumstances—not even a common identity as South Africans (Gibson and Gouws 2000). In Dahl's terms (1971), a political system based on "mutual security" has not yet emerged.

In light of the enormous centrifugal divisions in South Africa, political tolerance takes on great significance. The post-apartheid government made a major commitment to building political tolerance, and it is not unusual to see exhortations to tolerate in the mass media in South Africa. The value and necessity of toleration in the "Rainbow Nation" constitutes a central element of the ideology of the regime.

Earlier research in South Africa (not typically based on fully representative national surveys) has produced consistently pessimistic findings when it comes to political tolerance (e.g., Gouws 1993, 1996; Johnson and Schlemmer 1996; Johnson and Zulu 1996). But the intolerance of South Africans is different from the intolerance of Americans in that the groups feared in South Africa are not marginal, fringe groups, but are instead central competitors for political power. Moreover, intolerance in South Africa does not concern hypothetical situations in which respondents have no actual experience with their political enemy (as, for instance, with white Americans who specify the Ku Klux Klan as their target group), but is instead often extremely real and immediate. The threat posed by political enemies and the fear felt among ordinary people are real, and often the consequence is political violence. Tolerance matters so much in South Africa because intolerance is such a central element of politics in that country.

The relevance and immediacy of tolerance in South African political life have several consequences for this research. Most important, tolerance is not an abstract ideology; instead, it is more akin to a policy-relevant attitudinal choice. Second, the threat from political enemies is not abstract; instead, it is extremely relevant and meaningful to ordinary people. Thus, we expect threat perceptions to play a more substantial role in tolerance judgments than is ordinarily the case in research based on established, secure democracies. Finally, an experimental methodology can be used to capture and analyze the key contextual elements of the South African political reality.

Research Design

This analysis is based on a survey of South Africans conducted in 1996. We sampled the South African population using a two-stage process. First, we drew the primary sample, using standard area probability techniques. Second, we

[5] For instance, in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the most violence-ridden provinces in South Africa, the death toll from political conflict in 1995 was as high as 110 people per week (Gouws 1996).

supplemented this primary sample with an additional sample of respondents (N = 476) from groups constituting small proportions of the South African population. Specifically, we over-sampled Asians (Indians), Coloureds, English-speaking whites, Afrikaans-speaking whites, South Sotho-speaking Africans, North Sotho-speaking Africans, and Tswana-speaking Africans.[6] Interviews were completed with approximately 94% of the 3,258 respondents in the sample.[7] The respondents were interviewed in their language of choice. The original survey instrument was created in English and then translated into Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, North Sotho, and South Sotho.[8]

Using Vignettes to Study Context

Contextual processes are not easily investigated within the context of mass public surveys. Instead, the purpose of such surveys is usually to measure general predispositions (such as attitudes and values) or overall propensities (such as the likelihood of voting). In order for surveys to address contextual problems, it is necessary to employ the methodology of experimental vignettes.[9]

Experimental vignettes embedded within representative national samples provide a promising means for understanding contextual influences on mass opinions.[10] Vignettes are short stories about a political event.[11] The primary value

[6] Some of these "racial" categories are derived from the insidious system used by the South African government under apartheid to classify people by race. Our use of the same or similar categories should not be taken to imply approval of anything about apartheid. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of such categories, as an empirical matter South Africans of every race continue to use similar categories in their daily lives (e.g., distinguishing between black and Coloured people—see Gibson and Gouws 2000). Note as well that generally we follow the South African convention of referring to black South Africans as "Africans." Coloured people are those with a mixed racial identity, mainly through intermarriage of persons of white, black African, Malay, Indian, or Xhoi San descent.

[7] After discarding people who terminated the interview prematurely, we are left with 3,031 respondents, 53% of whom are female. Our sample includes 2,003 black South Africans, 502 whites, 256 Coloured people, and 270 South Africans of Asian origin. When we report analysis within group, we analyze unweighted data. When we report figures for the entire South African population we use only the data from the primary sample (and thus the number of respondents in a group is proportionate to the size of the group in the population).

[8] We employed the "double-blind technique" (see Brislin 1970) in translating and back-translating the instrument. Note that the investigators are fluent in Afrikaans and English.

[9] On experimentation in general see McGraw (1996).

[10] Sniderman and Grob (1996, 378) argue that a revolution has taken place in survey research methodology, that "the principal breakthrough has been to combine the distinctive external validity advantages of the representative public opinion survey with the decisive internal validity strengths of the fully randomized, multifaceted experiment."

[11] Rossi and his collaborators probably deserve the most credit for developing experimental vignettes. See for example Rossi and Anderson (1982) and Rossi and Nock (1982). In political science, Paul Sniderman and his colleagues have been instrumental in promoting the technique (e.g., Sniderman et al. 1996). For an excellent example of applying experimental vignettes to the study of political tolerance, see Marcus et al. 1995. See also Hamilton and Sanders (1992), for another insightful application of the methodology.

of vignettes is that they allow the contextualization of opinions. Instead of asking an abstract question about political tolerance, a concrete story provides the respondents a context with many important details about a civil liberties controversy. These details are often quite important for the opinions people form.

The power of vignettes such as these derives from their experimental nature and the subsequent ability to test hypotheses positing causality. If the investigator can identify specific attributes of the context as potential causes of civil liberties judgments, then those attributes can be manipulated in the vignettes. With the random assignment of respondents to the various treatment conditions (the different versions of the vignettes), strong causal conclusions are possible. If people make different choices, and if all other differences among them have been randomized, then the most likely causal source of the choices is the attribute varied in the vignette. In this sense, internal validity (whether the dependent variable was in fact caused by the independent variable—see Campbell and Stanley 1963, 3) is unusually strong.[12]

Modeling Context

Experimental Manipulations and Hypotheses

This research relies upon an experimental vignette included within our representative survey of the South African mass public. This portion of the interview began with a short story about a dispute over the civil liberties of a group that the respondent disliked a great deal.[13] In the stories, four contextual characteristics were manipulated, resulting in 16 versions of the vignette. Each respondent, of course, heard only a single story, and people were randomly assigned to vignette versions. The manipulations were orthogonal to each other, and the four dummy variables representing the manipulations are therefore uncorrelated. Table 1 reports the attributes we varied in the stories. Thus, the most threatening vignette read:

> As an election approaches, members of the [DISLIKED GROUP] want to hold a rally in a community where most people support their opponents. People in the community are worried that the [DISLIKED GROUP] will not follow all of the laws during the rally. The [DISLIKED GROUP] intends to give speeches that will make most people in the community very, very angry. Local community leaders aren't sure whether the rally should be allowed to take place since they say the speeches will be pretty dangerous and threatening. Some people

[12] The distinction between internal and external validity was first made by Campbell. For an explication see Cook and Campbell 1979.

[13] The vignette relies upon the "least-liked" methodology developed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1982). This approach is sometimes referred to as "content controlled" because it allows the respondents to identify the groups most relevant to them. In this instance, the degree of antipathy toward the group is a fifth experimental manipulation, with half of the respondents hearing a story about the group they dislike the most and the other half hearing a story about another highly disliked group. Because the identity of the group was not of course randomly designated, this experiment would be considered by some to be a "quasi-experiment" (see McGraw 1996).

TABLE 1

The Structure of the Vignette's Experimental Manipulations

Manipulation	Versions	Hypotheses
Anticipated Lawlessness	0. People in the community are worried that the [GROUP] will not follow all of the laws during the rally. 1. The [GROUP] promises it will follow all of the laws during the rally.	No promise of lawfulness → Intolerance
Community Antipathy	0. The [GROUP] intends to give speeches, but not many people in the community care one way or the other about what they have to say. 1. The [GROUP] intends to give speeches that will make most people in the community very, very angry.	Community anger → Intolerance
Role of Leaders	0. Local community leaders aren't sure whether the rally should be allowed to take place since they say the speeches will be pretty dangerous and threatening. 1. Local community leaders urge that the rally be allowed to take place since they say the speeches aren't really very dangerous or threatening.	Intolerant leaders → Intolerance
Deliberation	0. Some people are saying that the [GROUP] shouldn't be allowed to speak because their speeches will only recruit more people to the [GROUP]. 1. Some people are saying "let them speak because when they speak they show everyone just how foolish their ideals are."	Anti-tolerance deliberation → Intolerance

Note: The opening sentence of all vignettes read: As an election approaches, members of the [GROUP] want to hold a rally in a community where most people support their opponents.

> are saying that the [DISLIKED GROUP] shouldn't be allowed to speak because their speeches will only recruit more people to the [DISLIKED GROUP].

The least threatening version read:

> As an election approaches, members of the [DISLIKED GROUP] want to hold a rally in a community where most people support their opponents. The [DISLIKED GROUP] promises that it will follow all of the laws during the rally. The [DISLIKED GROUP] intends to give speeches, but not many people in the community care one way or the other about what they have to say. Local community leaders urge that the rally be allowed to take place since they say the speeches aren't really very dangerous or threatening. Some people are saying, "Let them speak because when they speak they show everyone just how foolish their ideals are."

After hearing the story, the subjects were asked to make a judgment about whether the rally should be allowed to take place. We expected that Version 1 would generate the most intolerant responses and that Version 16 would produce the highest level of tolerance. Because this is a true experiment (with random assignment of individuals to vignettes), doubts about causality, which frequently haunt social sciences, are minimized.[14] The experimental manipulations represent the different hypotheses under consideration.

ANTICIPATED LAWLESSNESS. A key contextual variable in many civil liberties disputes is expectations about whether the exercise of the liberty will be disruptive. Many of those who would not object to a private meeting held by their political enemies would nonetheless object to a demonstration held on public streets. The threat of disorder, even violence, is often given as one of the key justifications for denying political groups access to public places for political purposes (Gibson 1987; Gibson and Bingham 1985). Though opponents of a group have no legal right to veto a demonstration by threatening violence (e.g., the so-called heckler's veto), anticipations of violence often color reactions to attempts to hold rallies. Thus, we told half of the respondents that the people in the community were worried about potential lawlessness, while the other half we told that the group promises to follow all the laws. Of course, even in the latter case people may anticipate violence at the demonstration, either because the group breaks its promise or because the violence originates elsewhere. This possibility we consider more fully below.

COMMUNITY ANTIPATHY. Demonstrations are often planned for "enemy territory" in a bid for publicity for the demonstrators' cause. An obvious example is the Skokie/Nazi dispute. The Nazis were from Chicago and were embroiled in

[14] The experiment gets its external validity, first, from being embedded in a representative sample of South Africans, and, second, by the highly realistic nature of the story. At the time of the survey, South Africa was experiencing numerous conflicts precisely over the issue of whether political parties could demonstrate in "enemy" territory (the issue of "no-go" zones). We are virtually certain that very few of the respondents had any difficulty whatsoever in imagining the circumstances portrayed in the vignette.

a controversy over the desegregation of a local neighborhood. Skokie had absolutely nothing to do with the original conflict. The Chicago Nazis sought to demonstrate in Skokie in a bid, which was entirely successful, for publicity for their cause.

In South Africa, rival political parties often try to demonstrate in communities dominated by the opposition. In these "no-go" areas of the country (many in KwaZulu Natal), the appearance of members of an opposition party often incites violence (Gouws 1996, 28). Parties attempt such demonstrations not only as a means of gaining publicity, but also as an effort to recruit local support. Campaigning in "enemy territory" is apparently thought to be more beneficial to the party than campaigning in locales where support already exists. Thus, one of our contextual manipulations has to do with the reaction of the community to the proposed demonstration. In one version, the community is indifferent; in the other it is incensed.

ROLE OF LEADERS. The mass media certainly plays an important role in framing civil liberties disputes (e.g., Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). But in South Africa, the mass media is not universally accessible to ordinary people, in part due to illiteracy and in part due to language. As a consequence, local political leaders play an uncommonly important role in mediating disputes in many South African communities (e.g., Mattes 1997). The "frames" that local leaders use to describe the controversy were varied, from the leaders urging that the demonstration be banned (because it is dangerous and threatening) to urging that it be allowed to take place (because it is neither dangerous nor threatening).

DELIBERATION. We hypothesize that the views of leaders are important to most South Africans, but so too are the views and arguments put forth by ordinary people. In many civil liberties disputes, people do not know what to think, so they seek guidance from those whose views they trust. The deliberation that goes on is important for understanding the dispute since a tolerant outcome is unlikely without considered judgments (Gibson 1998; Marcus et al. 1995; Stouffer 1955; but see Kuklinski et al. 1991, 1993). Consequently, we varied the discourse in the community from an argument favoring banning the groups (because their speech will recruit more adherents) to an argument supporting the speech (because the speech will expose the foolishness of the group's ideas).

The Dependent Variables

Tables 2 and 3 report the basic judgments of the vignettes made by the respondents. The first table describes their decisions on whether to tolerate the demonstration; Table 3 describes their estimates of the degree of threat posed to the community by the demonstration.

TABLE 2

Should Political Enemies Be Allowed to Demonstrate?

	Vignette Judgments—Political Tolerance					
	Percentages					
	Intolerant	Uncertain	Tolerant	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
All South Africans	66.4	14.5	19.1	2.19	1.23	2498
African[a]	71.3	13.9	14.8	2.05	1.16	1961
White	43.9	17.7	38.4	2.84	1.34	485
Coloured	61.3	13.3	25.4	2.28	1.33	248
Asian Origin	53.9	19.0	27.1	2.58	1.25	269

[a]Cross-race difference of means: $\eta = .24$; $p < .0000$.

Note: The question read: "Do you think the rally ought to be allowed to take place?" The responses range from "1. Strongly believe it should not be allowed" to "5. Strongly believe it should be allowed." "Intolerant" responses are those who assert that the rally ought not to take place, whether they feel strongly or not. Similar coding characterizes those described as giving "tolerant" responses. The means and standard deviations are based on the uncollapsed responses.

TABLE 3

Perceptions of Group Threat

	Vignette Judgments–Perceived Threat					
	Percentages					
	Not Threatening	Uncertain	Threatening	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
All South Africans	22.4	9.1	68.5	7.35	2.65	2478
African[a]	17.9	9.7	72.4	7.64	2.54	1942
White	40.5	5.6	53.9	6.09	2.64	486
Coloured	27.8	8.9	63.3	7.10	2.93	248
Asian Origin	38.4	5.7	55.9	6.27	2.53	263

[a]Cross-race difference of means: $\eta = .24$; $p < .0000$.

Note: The question read: "First, think about how threatening such a rally would be *to the people in the community*. If 10 means that such a rally would be extremely threatening to the community and 1 means it would not be threatening at all, of all the numbers from 1 to 10, which best describes how threatening a rally would be? For example, you might answer with an 8 if you think the rally would be threatening but not extremely threatening, or a 3 if you think the rally would be just a little threatening to the members of the community." "Not threatening" responses are those who answered with responses between 1 and 5; scores between 6 and 10 are counted as "threatening." The respondents were allowed to answer that they were "uncertain" about the level of threat posed. The means and standard deviations are based on the uncollapsed responses.

Perhaps not surprisingly in light of earlier findings on the intolerance of South Africans (Gibson and Gouws 1997, Gouws 1993, 1996), few people are willing to allow the rally to take place. Roughly two-thirds of the South Africans favor prohibiting the demonstration. A large majority of Africans is intolerant, and a significant proportion of Coloured South Africans is intolerant, as are a majority of South Africans of Asian origin and a plurality of white South Africans. The vignette was obviously fairly successful at generating intolerance.

A portion of the explanation for the intolerance can be found in Table 3. A substantial majority of South Africans perceived some degree of threat to the community arising from the details in the vignette, and many perceived the rally as very threatening. For instance, fully 35% rated the level of threat at the most extreme point on the 10-point threat continuum (and virtually no one thought the community was entirely unthreatened). Again, racial differences are substantial, with Africans perceiving the largest threat and white South Africans (and those of Asian origin) perceiving the smallest threat to the people in the community.

These two variables are very closely connected. The correlations range from −.47 among the whites to −.72 among Coloured South Africans. This is powerful reconfirmation that one of the chief causes of intolerance is the threat posed by the group (see Duch and Gibson 1992; Marcus et al. 1995), and no doubt reflects the realism of threat and political conflict in contemporary South Africa.

The Direct Effect of the Manipulations

To what degree did the experimental manipulations affect the two primary judgment variables—the level of perceived threat and the willingness to allow the demonstration to take place? Table 4 reports the mean tolerance and threat responses for each of the experimental manipulations, divided by whether the stimulus employed was the most disliked group or another highly disliked group.

The overwhelming story of this table is that tolerance and threat perceptions are *not* dependent upon the context as represented in the vignettes. The strongest relationships are found with the community feelings manipulation—where the community was said to be angry, tolerance was less widespread, and perceptions of threat were higher (among both group stimuli). Even here, however, the differences in means *do not* achieve statistical significance at conventional levels.[15]

The failure of these contextual manipulations presents some interesting puzzles. For instance, whether the group promises to follow the law or not is irrelevant to perceptions of threat and willingness to tolerate. The explanation is

[15] Note that the difference of means tests for each dependent variable across the sixteen versions of the vignette reveals statistically *insignificant* differences.

TABLE 4

The Direct Effect of the Experimental Manipulations on Tolerance and Threat Perceptions

	Political Tolerance			Perceptions of Threat		
Manipulation	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Other Disliked Group						
Anticipated Lawlessness						
Not follow	2.32	1.25	639	7.07	2.66	632
Promise to follow	2.30	1.27	600	7.00	2.79	594
Community Antipathy						
Won't care	2.35	1.24	605	6.89	2.70	600
Be angry	2.27	1.27	634	7.17	2.74	626
Role of Leaders						
Intolerant	2.31	1.27	626	6.99	2.72	620
Tolerant	2.30	1.25	613	7.08	2.73	606
Deliberation						
Pro intolerance	2.29	1.27	611	7.07	2.71	607
Pro tolerance	2.32	1.24	628	7.00	2.74	620
Most Disliked Group						
Anticipated Lawlessness						
Not follow	2.07	1.18	667	7.66	2.56	662
Promise to follow	2.08	1.22	592	7.64	2.49	591
Community Antipathy						
Won't care	2.11	1.18	607	7.52	2.60	602
Be angry	2.04	1.21	652	7.77	2.45	650
Role of Leaders						
Intolerant	2.07	1.21	642	7.62	2.53	640
Tolerant	2.08	1.18	617	7.69	2.53	612
Deliberation						
Pro intolerance	2.09	1.20	641	7.62	2.59	637
Pro tolerance	2.06	1.20	617	7.69	2.46	615

Note: None of the within-manipulation difference of means tests is significant at .05.

surely simple—promises made by hated political enemies are just not believed. This conjecture receives strong support from the "manipulation check" for this experimental treatment; there is no difference whatsoever across the two types of scenarios in responses to the question, "How certain are you that [THE GROUP] will try to follow the law in holding this rally?" The promise was simply not credible to our subjects.

Similarly, the views of community leaders had virtually no impact on the respondents. Since the stimulus directly concerns the level of threat posed by the group, we expected at least some influence on threat perceptions. We found none. Again, the manipulation check revealed no differences between the vignette versions in the certainty that "the leaders of the community say they

support the right of [THE GROUP] to hold the rally." Our effort to convince the respondents that the leaders were tolerant failed.

Nor did the effort to encourage the respondents to deliberate succeed in influencing their positions on the demonstration. Earlier research has suggested that these arguments can be persuasive under certain conditions (Gibson 1998); here, they had no effect whatsoever. It seems that by the time the respondents heard this portion of the vignette, their minds were firmly made up.

The community feelings experiment is the only manipulation that "passed" its manipulation check, with those told that the community was angry about the demonstration apparently believing it. Nonetheless, the direct effect of community anger on tolerance, like the other direct effects, is not statistically significant. Thus, neither the manipulations that were correctly nor incorrectly perceived had any impact on perceptions of threat and political tolerance.

These data reveal a remarkable degree of *insensitivity* to the context of civil liberties disputes. Indeed, a simple way to characterize these findings is that South Africans who are threatened by their political enemies would deny them the opportunity to participate in politics—period. Apparently, not much more need be said.

Perhaps not. Table 5 reports the results of regressing the tolerance judgment on both the objective and perceived characteristics of the experiment.[16] That is, Model I reports the results of regressing tolerance on the four dummy variables representing the manipulations. Model II uses the same experimental variables but adds four perceptual variables (the items used as manipulation checks), as well as the perception of threat variable. The data support several conclusions.

First, confirming the analysis above, there is little direct effect of the experimental manipulations in either of the two models. Second, also as expected, perceived group threat has a moderate to strong direct influence on tolerance (Model II).[17] In light of existing research findings, this is not surprising.

Several of the perceptual variables have a significant influence on tolerance judgments. Especially important are perceptions of whether the group will follow the law. To the extent that the respondents perceived that the group would obey the law at the demonstration, they were tolerant. Conversely, an important justification for denying the group the right to demonstrate was fear that the law would be broken at the rally. Among those believing it very unlikely that the law would be followed, 91.6% were intolerant; among those believing law-abidingness very likely, only 38.9% were intolerant. Somewhat unexpectedly, perceived lawfulness has a considerably stronger impact than perceptions that

[16] This analytical approach is identical to that employed by Gibson and Gouws (1999) in their analysis of a vignette on attitudes toward the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa.

[17] Note that once the measure of threat perceptions is included in an equation, it is no longer necessary to control for whether the respondent was told a story about her or his most disliked or another highly disliked group. Adding that dummy variable to Model II has no effect whatsoever on the results.

TABLE 5

The Effects of Experimental and Perceptual Variables on Political Tolerance

	Model I				Model II			
	b	s.e.	Beta	r	b	s.e.	Beta	r
Experimental Treatment								
Community Antipathy: Apathetic v. Very Angry	−.07	.05	−.03	−.03	−.00	.04	−.00	−.03
Anticipated Lawlessness: High v. Low	−.01	.05	−.00	−.00	−.02	.04	−.01	−.00
Role of Leaders: Intolerant v. Tolerant	.00	.05	.00	.00	.00	.04	.00	.00
Deliberation: Intolerant v. Tolerant	.01	.05	.00	.00	.00	.04	.00	.00
Contextual Perceptions								
Certain Community Is Angry					−.08	.02	−.08*	−.38
Certain Group Will Try to Follow Law					.25	.02	.26*	.56
Likelihood of Violence					−.10	.02	−.11*	−.48
Certainty of Leader Tolerance					.14	.02	.15*	.43
Perceived Group Threat					−.15	.01	−.32*	−.58
Intercept (s.e.)	2.23	.06			3.11	.12		
Standard Error of Estimate	1.24				.89			
Standard Deviation	1.24				1.24			
R^2			.00				.48*	

*Standardized regression coefficient is significant at $p < .001$.

Note: N = 2463

violence will occur at the demonstration. Irrespective of whether the respondents expected violence to occur, confidence that the group would follow the law substantially influences willingness to allow the demonstration.

It is noteworthy that violence has less impact on intolerance than law-abidingness. This may be connected to the Marcus et al. (1995) arguments about "normative violations." They find, for instance, that the power or potential power of a group has little to do with tolerance. Instead, intolerance arises from the threat to the symbolic values of the community. (This is similar to the conventional finding that sociotropic threat perceptions are more powerful predictors of intolerance than egocentric perceptions—see Feldman and Stenner 1997; Gibson and Gouws 1997, 2000). Breaking the law seems to be a more powerful transgression against community values than simply engaging in violence, which, after all, may have many different sources and causes.

Although perceptions of community anger have a substantial bivariate relationship with political tolerance, the multivariate effect is much weakened. This is to be expected in light of the influence of the more proximate variables concerning violence and following the law. Presumably, one of the reasons for community anger is the fear that the group will not follow the law at the demonstration. Once the effect of that variable is controlled, the influence of perceived community anger is slight.

Thus, we have an interesting paradox in these findings: *the actual context of the dispute has little impact on political tolerance, while the perceived context has a great deal of influence* (explaining nearly one-half of the variance in levels of political tolerance). This obviously implies that the variables measuring the actual context are weakly related to perceptions, and that is in fact the case.[18] What people perceive about civil liberties conflicts matters considerably, even if their perceptions are a function of their predispositions rather than reality.

The question naturally arising from these findings is what accounts for variation in perceptions of the civil liberties context? It is beyond the scope of this article to consider a fully specified model of these perceptions. However, the finding that the strength of the group stimulus affects perceptions (see footnote 18) provides a clue to the origins of contextual perceptions. We hypothesize that those more threatened by the group are more likely to perceive the context as dangerous.

We have two independent measures of threat perceptions. The first is based on the threat of the group (most disliked or other greatly disliked) to the re-

[18] We regressed each of the four perceptual variables on the five dichotomous manipulations (including whether the group was the most disliked or another highly disliked group). In every case, the type of group stimulus was significantly related to the perception. But in only a single instance was one of the perceptual variables affected by the experimental variables: those who were told the community would be angry in fact perceived the community as angrier, although the relationship is fairly weak ($\beta = .07$). In no other instance were perceptions grounded in the context of the vignette.

spondent and is derived from questions asked independently of the vignette.[19] The second measure was the first question to follow the presentation of the story, and it assesses threat to the community involved in the vignette (i.e., the variable reported in Table 3, above). The correlation of these two measures is .41. Not surprisingly, since it is more proximate to the context, the latter is a better predictor of tolerance in the vignette ($r = -.58$ versus $-.38$), and vignette-based threat perceptions are strongly correlated with all other perceptions of the context of the story (correlations range from $-.35$ to .49). But the general perceptions of threat (what Marcus et al. (1995) call "standing decisions") are also strongly related to the specific perceptions of the context. For instance, those who are more threatened in general by the group were less likely to believe it would follow the law ($r = -.37$), more likely to assert that the community would be angry ($r = .36$), and more likely to anticipate violence ($r = .39$). Clearly, generalized perceptions of threat have much to do with how people view the particular context of civil liberties controversies.

Taking a small step away from the data, the causal process involved here seems to be fairly simple. Most people in South Africa are highly threatened by their political enemies, and they therefore are willing to ascribe every manner of undesirable attributes to them. When faced with a civil liberties dispute, most are prepared to believe the worst about the group, including that the group's promises cannot be believed, that the group will not follow the law, etc. These predispositions are not easily changed by reality, and indeed the actual details of the dispute have little impact on tolerance. In the scenario under consideration here, South Africans are prepared to believe that the rally is threatening to the community and, consequently, that it should be banned. The variable that drives this entire process is the pre-existing belief about the degree of threat posed by the group. The reality of the circumstances has a very difficult time overriding the effect of these predispositions.

These findings diverge from those of Marcus et al. (1995), who discovered a somewhat stronger impact of contextual factors. There are several possible explanations of the differences in our findings. First, their analysis in fact reveals only modest effects of context on tolerance judgments (e.g., Table 4.2, p. 77). Second, they employed a fictitious group and used (mainly) college students as their research subjects and did so within the context of the United States. Our subjects are a representative sample of ordinary South Africans who named real political enemies at a time when South African politics involved intense

[19] We measured threat perceptions in the conventional way using a set of semantic differential items to describe attitudes toward the groups. The adjectives pairs are: (1) not dangerous to society versus dangerous to society, (2) predictable versus unpredictable, (3) committed to democracy versus not committed to democracy, (4) dangerous to the normal lives of people versus not dangerous to the normal lives of people, (5) likely to affect how well my family and I live versus unlikely to affect how well my family and I live, (6) angry toward the group versus indifferent toward the group, and (7) willing to follow the rules of democracy versus not willing to follow the rules of democracy. A factor analysis of these items reveals a strongly unidimensional structure. The measure employed in this analysis is the factor score from this unrotated solution.

political rivalries and fairly common political violence. The realism of the vignette most likely contributed to our finding that predispositions toward the group overwhelmed all other contextual variance. These findings suggest the hypothesis that the greater the political significance of the group used, the weaker will be the influence of context. Marcus and his colleagues conducted their research on relatively abstract, fictitious groups, while we focused on highly meaningful, threatening groups. That difference likely accounts for our diverging conclusions about the role of context in tolerance disputes.[20]

At the same time, our analysis reinforces the view that "standing decisions" are extremely important for tolerance judgments. On this point, our findings comport well with those of Marcus et al. (1995).

A Note of Caution about Deliberation

The strongest contextual manipulation observed by Marcus et al. had to do with the "instruction set" instructing the respondents on how to deliberate in making their decisions. "Subjects who are told to pay attention to their feelings are significantly less tolerant than those who are told to pay attention to their thoughts. This finding is consistent with the notion that a 'sober second thought' leads people to reconsider their automatic response, which is a natural intolerance toward groups and ideas they find objectionable" (Marcus et al. 1995, 80). This finding is inconsistent with that of Kuklinski et al. (1991, 1993); it also seems to be inconsistent with the findings we report here.

Our manipulation sought to influence judgments by introducing arguments into the vignette that the respondent might not have considered otherwise. The manipulation had no effect whatsoever, despite the fact that in earlier work in Russia similar arguments were found to have considerable impact (Gibson 1998). We have some additional evidence, however, that perhaps can clarify the role of "sober second thoughts" in this experiment.

[20] Our argument here is that the judgments of people who perceive little threat will be more influenced by contextual factors than the judgments of those perceiving more considerable threat. We contend that in South Africa, political threats take on a more realistic character as compared to countries with more deeply institutionalized democratic institutions. Nonetheless, some South Africans do perceive relatively little threat from their enemies, so we can assess whether the contextual aspects of the vignette were more influential with them. To test the conditional hypothesis, we trichotomized the general measure of group threat, defining the categories as less than $-.5$, $-.5$ through $+.5$, and greater than .5 on the standardized factor score measuring threat perceptions. We then regressed the vignette tolerance measure on the four dichotomous manipulation variables within each of these threat levels. In the medium and high threat groups, none of the regression coefficients for the manipulation variables was significant at even .05. For the low threat group, the anticipated lawlessness manipulation coefficient is significant at $p < .05$, and the coefficient for the deliberation manipulation is significant at $p = .056$. Neither of the other two coefficients achieves statistical significance. This is, of course, a rather limited test since few South Africans are entirely unthreatened by their political enemies (and the trichotomy indicates relative threat, not absolute levels of threat), but the findings are nonetheless compatible with our understanding of the process involved in the vignettes.

After the respondents had completed all questions connected to the vignette, we posed the following three additional counterarguments to determine whether they might be willing to alter their position:

1. Suppose that [THE GROUP], fearing it won't be allowed to hold the rally, promises to obey all laws during the rally, and it further promises not to attack the opposition party or its supporters. A local judge accepts these promises. Do you think the rally ought to be allowed to take place?
2. Suppose that the local authorities promise that they will do whatever is necessary to ensure that there is no violence at the rally. Do you think the rally ought to be allowed to take place?
3. Suppose someone argued that you can't really trust the authorities to say who can and who cannot hold a rally and therefore all groups should be allowed to hold rallies. Do you think the rally ought to be allowed to take place?

It is instructive to note how those who gave intolerant or uncertain responses to the vignette reacted to these attempts at forcing further deliberation. Table 6 shows the results.

Each of these arguments increased the likelihood of tolerating the demonstration. While only 19.1% of the subjects were initially inclined to tolerate the rally, an additional 10.0% were persuaded to allow it under the condition that the local authorities would do their best to prevent violence. The other two manipulations had smaller effects. Nonetheless, the arguments were not redundant—33.1% of the respondents gave at least one tolerant response after the three efforts to persuade them to support allowing the rally. Thus, these arguments had some influence on South Africans.

How is it that the arguments in the vignette were not persuasive, while the arguments after the vignette were? We wonder whether the respondents were making "satisficing" judgments as they were hearing the vignettes. That is, perhaps some people had enough information to form an opinion after the first sentence of the vignettes: they hated the group and did not want it to

TABLE 6

The Effects of Persuasive Communications on Political Tolerance

	Percentages[a]					
Argument	Intolerant	Uncertain	Tolerant	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Baseline	66.4	14.5	19.1	2.19	1.23	2498
Promises Accepted by the Judge	55.0	20.3	24.7	2.44	1.26	2495
Authorities Prevent Violence	52.3	18.6	29.1	2.52	1.31	2494
Can't Trust the Authorities	54.5	20.2	25.4	2.47	1.26	2490

[a]The rows total to 100%, except for rounding errors. Note that this is a categorical variable created from the continuous tolerance judgments.

demonstrate—therefore they formed a judgment before considering all of the statements in the vignette. The counterarguments were ineffective because the respondents simply ignored them. However, when presented as a separate question to which the respondents were explicitly asked to reply, the arguments had greater force. The point we wish to emphasize, however, is that the vignette evidence is perhaps not entirely incompatible with persuasibility research based on the "sober second thought" model. From a substantive point of view, this finding suggests that deliberation *may be* most effective when it is separated from the immediate details of the controversy itself.

Discussion

Perhaps our most important conclusion is that context matters, but not in the way that we originally emphasized here. It is the *South African context* that matters, not the details of the particular civil liberties controversy. South Africans hold general views toward their political enemies; those views strongly flavor perceptions of the context, to the point of overwhelming objective information about the specific civil liberties dispute. The real context in South Africa is that people live in a political system in which violence is commonplace and group threat is real. Presenting these people a brief vignette, no matter how much it is based on real-life situations, does not override what these people are experiencing just outside their doors. In this sense, the "perceived context" that is so influential in this analysis is more real than the "actual context" as described in the vignettes.

Results drawn from political systems in which questions of tolerance are central to the political process may well differ from results from political systems in which tolerance is more peripheral. In the US, for instance, contextual factors seem to matter more (e.g., Marcus et al. 1995), probably because threat perceptions are less realistic and therefore do not dominate judgments. In South Africa, political tolerance is not a matter of whether "fringe" groups can compete for political power. Instead, it is a crucial issue of how much freedom to extend to even the "loyal" political opposition. If ever there were a case in which issues of "applied" tolerance are important, it is South Africa. This basic reality surely influences all the findings of this research.

This research was initiated in part by the suspicion that generalized tolerance attitudes were not particularly useful predictors of judgments within specific disputes. Instead, our principal finding is that some general attitudes—threat perceptions—are extremely important and that they shape reactions to specific disputes in virtually every fashion. The way people perceive contentious efforts to exercise civil liberties is heavily dependent on frames of reference provided by their predispositions. This makes further research on the origins of those predispositions all the more important.

Threat perceptions play a dominant function in all models of political tolerance, and our research adds one more role for this important variable. But one of the most vital unanswered questions in tolerance research concerns the ori-

gins of these threat perceptions. We simply do not have very effective models specifying why some will feel threatened and why others in similar circumstances do not (but see Gibson and Gouws 2000). Solving this riddle is perhaps the most important task for the field at the moment.

Our research also demonstrates how important it is to move beyond the American context when studying political tolerance. The United States is unusual in many respects, ranging from strong cultural individualism to powerful political institutions committed to protecting the rights of political minorities, and therefore the extent to which findings from the U.S. are generalizable is unclear. Political conflict in many parts of the world is far more severe than in the U.S., making tolerance a precious and scarce commodity. In South Africa, the objective context of a demonstration seems not to matter, most likely because the political stakes are so large. Thus, this research has identified a new contextual variable—the size of the stakes in the dispute—that should receive more attention through additional cross-national research.

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